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ABSTRACT

The firm stance of the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) on the problems of working class women in 1906 was not an impulsive act of altruism, but rather the result of a finely planned campaign that combined the ingenuity and resourcefulness of two women: the GFWC's president, Sarah Platt Decker, and the women's editor of the New York "Evening Post," Rheta Childe Dorr. Dorr gave sensitive coverage to two distinct kinds of publics--the working women in the sweatshops of New York and other Eastern manufacturing centers and club women who were beginning to realize that contemporary social issues should be the center for their energies. Dorr's attitude toward women and their work was essentially two-fold: that equality between men's and women's workplace conditions and pay was necessary because women had to work to survive, and that women were fully as capable as men of deriving a sense of independence and satisfaction from their participation in the work force. An examination of Dorr's journalistic, working world and club participation poses two questions of concern to journalism historians: "how has women's participation and current status within the labor force--and within journalism history--been shaped by the attention women have received?" and "did women's editors slow the progress of women in those years following the advocacy of the Progressive Era?" (HOD)

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HISTORY DIVISION

CLUB "LADIES" AND WORKING "GIRLS":

RHETA CHILDE DORR AND THE NEW YORK EVENING POST

by

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In June of 1906 some 3,000 women from all parts of the United States gathered in St. Paul, Minnesota, for the biennial convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. The 17-year-old national network of clubs through its 400 voting delegates represented something new--middle and upper class, genteel "protected wives,"[1] who were politicized into action on reform issues in a public forum, a unity in action which would have been unthinkable for their mothers.

Among the resolutions passed by the GFWC was one concerning two groups which were supposed to be removed from the realm of this class of women: the Congress of the United States and a growing segment of the nation's population--women who worked. The GFWC "heartily endorsed"[2] a resolution from its Industrial Committee that the federal government investigate the numbers of women in the work force and the conditions under which they labored. Although five years would pass before the study, which had already been approved by Congressional leaders under carefully orchestrated pressure from the clubwomen, was completed, the convention vote was important. By their support the women forged a strong link between the nation's growing upper and middle classes and its equally expanding labor force, helping to foster what Richard Hofstader has identified as the ease with which this nation accepted the organized labor movement.[3]

The club women's firm stance on the problems of working class women was not an impulsive act of altruism, but rather the result of a finely planned campaign which combined the ingenuity and resourcefulness of two women in particular: the GFWC's enormously popular president,

Sarah Platt Decker of Denver, and the dynamic women's editor of the New York Evening Post, Rheta Childe Dorr. To promote her ideals of club women participating in what she considered essential social programs, Decker needed "good press"[4] just as she needed able workers who were committed to her agenda for action. Decker found the ideal combination in Dorr, an energetic newspaperwoman who was personally involved with this specific plank in Decker's platform for club participation: the obvious need to do something about the appalling conditions in which working women labored in the crowded inner cities and the small factory and mill towns of the nation in the first decade of the Twentieth Century.

Focus for this paper rests on the conceptual bridge between "working girls" and "club ladies" which was built with words by newswomen, in this case, the reporting of Rheta Childe Dorr in the Post from 1902 until mid-1906 and on her dual role as club woman, participating in many of the events she was covering. Also reviewed are some of the problems which women had to surmount at the time in terms of social perceptions concerning "woman's place," problems which Dorr astutely identified. Dorr's attitude toward women and their work was essentially two-fold: that equality between men's and women's workplace conditions and pay was necessary because women had to work to survive, and, further, that women were as fully capable as men of deriving a sense of independence and satisfaction from their participation in the work force.

Much of media history is written with an institutional pen; that is, the male bias of what has been traditionally considered important is only slowly beginning to be overtaken by what has been termed a cultural approach.[5] For example, the genuinely "important" reporting has been considered as that coverage of immediate, breaking and "exciting"

stories such as wars and riots, a definition of "real" journalism too ingrained in our consciousnesses to be easily replaced.

The values of this institutionally-defined journalism influence the way with which journalists perceive themselves and the importance of their own work. Excitement, immediacy, being "where the action is"--all these combine in both the public and the professional mind as being of utmost importance. Dorr herself placed far more emphasis and value on her coverage of the Russian Revolution and World War I[6] than she did on her earlier work promoting women's participation in trade unions and helping to convince genteel club women that reforms in the workplace had direct concern for their own sheltered, middle-class lives. This bias on the part of Dorr is understandable in light of the value given the male role model. By covering a war--which was clearly what men were assigned to do--Dorr saw herself engaged in "real" journalism. "As good as any man" was a compliment to women in Dorr's time just as it goes unchallenged by some women today in a world where "public" and "important" issues are still generally defined as those issues which concern men.

And yet, from the historical vantage point, Dorr's reports from Russia simply were part of the biased reporting which Lippman and Merz criticized in 1920,[7] reporting which offers a plausible starting point for the idea of Cold War being rooted in the mis-understanding and dis-understanding of those well-intentioned journalists, including Dorr, who witnessed the beginnings of the Bolshevik revolution.

But Dorr's ideas about the inequalities suffered by the American laboring class, and women in the labor force in particular, have gained credence with each passing year. In fact, some of what she said to the

General Federation of Women's Clubs at its 1906 convention forms the heart of contemporary feminist arguments about the fact of women's increasing place in the work force and necessary and capable participation outside the stereotypical domain of home.

As demonstrated by the stories she chose to cover and the items she selected for her column in the Post's Saturday Supplement, Dorr was fully engaged in what is now considered advocacy journalism. The lack of editorial control over or interest in her page allowed her a great deal of freedom to report what she wanted and how she wanted. In fact, she recalled the most praise she received as coming from the business department at the Post because her pages were attracting readers and, as a result, advertisers.[8] A similar sentiment was to ring loudly through the newspaper industry in the 1970s, as women's editors complained of the news side's lack of interest and investment in their "back of the book" sections.[9]

Just as women's editors in the late 1960s and into the 1970s were the first in establishment journalism to give any kind of sensitive coverage to America's most recent wave of feminism,[10] so Dorr gave sensitive coverage to two distinct kinds of publics--the working women in the sweatshops of New York and other Eastern manufacturing centers and club women who were beginning to realize that what GFWC President Decker said was indeed true, "Dante is dead,"[11] and contemporary social issues should be the center for their energies.

That she apparently was influential in helping to amalgamate the interests of these two very diverse classes of women in an immediate, albeit temporary, force for action is obvious. Her flagrantly participatory role in helping establish credibility for the issue of working

women and women in the club movement must be seen in light of what constituted accepted journalistic practice at the time.

In late July, 1902, Hammond Lamont was named managing editor of the conservative old Evening Post[12] and soon after, hired Dorr, who, apparently was the first woman to work full-time for the Post. Not surprisingly, Lamont was responding to complaints from the business department that women were not reading the paper and an effort should be made to attract this readership.[13] As Dorr notes in her autobiography, A Woman of Fifty, having "a woman on the staff was an experiment"[14] for the men at the Post. While the staid Post did not demean itself by entering the circulation battles waged by the Journal, the World and the Tribune, it did have a solid base of readers among the influential, moneyed people of New York.

Dorr knew that she "was writing for the class that buys at expensive shops, patronizes the smartest milliners and keeps house with many servants."[15] Although her stories sometimes came under Lamont's close scrutiny, she could and did promote those causes she considered important in her weekly Saturday Supplement page. In addition she developed a week-day women's page, which usually appeared on Wednesdays.

For Dorr, the Post job represented the first secure position she had held since arriving in New York in 1898 from Seattle. Then 32, divorced and with a 3-year-old son to support, Dorr, ever the optimist, had great hopes of immediately establishing herself as a writer.[16] She soon faced the reality of the profession to which she aspired and the position of women in journalism and in general: "As far as I could see I lived in a world entirely hostile to women, a world in which every

right and every privilege were claimed by men."[17] At the Sun, for example, the sole woman on the staff was "never allowed to enter the city-room. She got her assignments and wrote her copy in the office boy's dark cubbyhole."[18]

Eeking out survival for her son and herself by freelance writing assignments, some of them for women's departments of the various dailies, Dorr learned about the lack of pay equity even as she learned hard lessons about other women's plight through observing her neighbors in the crowded immigrant section where she lived.

She saw her position at the Post as an opportunity to produce something more than a "milk and water" women's section, the kind she scorned.[19] Initially, her attention was on the women's clubs and one of her first on-site reporting assignments was covering the 1902 New York State Federation convention in Brooklyn.[20] However, the focus was not to rest solely on clubs and to that end, Dorr changed the Saturday Supplement heading from "In the Women's Clubs" to "Women and Their Interests." Later she sub-headed this with a listing of national and state Federation officers. Just when she became a GFWC member is not clear, but it is quite likely that she joined the women's Press Club which was an affiliate of the state federation and, as such, of the national organization.

In addition to the "Interests" column, Dorr provided lengthy coverage of fashions on the Saturday page and another column devoted to domesticity. But, clearly, the "Interests" column provided her a forum for her ideals. Since exchanges with other papers and the reporting of items from magazines as well as club publications was still an accepted method of gathering copy, Dorr obviously culled such sources, scattering

factual reporting with her own commentary. Also, she covered the growing numbers of reform groups, such as the Consumers League, and did not neglect the suffrage groups.

"Interests" provides a primer for women's activities of the times as well as a sometimes amusing and often thought-provoking sampler of Dorr's ideas, such as this from a column in January of 1903:

> The woman's club movement indirectly is paving the way to equal suffrage. The thousands of women who are working through the clubs for municipal reforms cannot help but see how ineffectual are their efforts for speedy results without the power to help make the laws and to help enforce them.[21]

It should be added that Dorr, throughout her life, clearly saw the vote as only an important step toward equity for women, not as an end-all and be-all achievement.

Unifying women who were alientated by what they considered the "radicals" within the suffrage movement became an increasingly important goal for Dorr, one which required a degree of diplomacy, not blunt propagandizing. She became more moderate in her proselytising for suffrage, just as she grew increasingly enthusiastic about clubwomen's participation in current social movements, most specifically in regard to women and work. This statement in March of 1904 reflects her more moderate public tone:

> The General Federation is not a reform organization. It is interested in a broad and comprehensive way in social uplifting, philanthropy, education, and industrial conditions affecting women and children. Civil service reform is included in its list of activities, but it has never sought to commit its members to woman suffrage, prohibition, socialism, or any political or social reform movement about which honest people differ. It cannot be doubted that this is the way of wisdom.[22]

There is little doubt that Dorr, as she became more familiar with the intricacies of club politics, especially on the state and national level,

realized that to push conservative club women into a position where they had to choose between commitment to suffrage or relinquishing their club memberships, they would most likely choose the latter.

Since the election of Sarah Platt Decker at the St. Louis convention in June of 1904 was virtually assured, Dorr, as an enthusiastic supporter of Decker, quite probably did not want to do anything to damage the Colorado woman's ascent to national stature. Because Decker was from a "free state," so to speak--Colorado women could and did vote--Decker had to overcome the revulsion of certain Federation members, most particularly those from Southern clubs, toward the suffrage issue. Decker, although she too might have been described as "radical" in terms of her positions on social issues, was the ultimate politician and diplomat among women at the time.

It is not within the scope of this paper to given an adequate portrayal of this totally remarkable woman, who traveled almost continually during her four years as GFWC president in an effort to unify club women, to pull them out of their literary studies and into the world. Her dimensions were as impressive as her personality and her ability to say the right things to the audiences she addressed shines from almost every press clipping available.[23] Newspersons in every part of the nation did not just report Decker; they lavished her with superlatives.

One story may suffice to illustrate Decker's charm and wit. Addressing a club meeting attended by 500 women, she suggested the ladies abandon the kitchen:

> Is it worthwhile to wear our lives out baking cookies for these little mouths? Give the boys baker's cookies. They never will know the difference. We are capable of being much more than mothers. Isn't it much better for us to have wholesome refreshment outside our homes? There is something more vital in life

> for us than bending over a rolling pin all day to fill little Johnny up with sugared cookies. Baker's cookies are good enough for him.[24]

In the same speech, Decker proclaimed that women should "no longer be the vine which twines around the rugged oak. Women today should be the peers of sensible, wise men."

At the 1904 St. Louis convention after her election as president, Decker called Dorr from the press table, told her she had read her articles in the Post and asked Dorr to head the Federation's Industrial Conditions of Women and Children committee.[25] Decker, Dorr and the committee members formulated a plan for study among the clubs and action via requesting the Congressional investigation.

The articles which had attracted Decker's attention were Dorr's regular pieces on women and work. During the first year and a half of her time at the Post, these involved women's work which at least marginally fell within the sphere of femininity, such as "Work of a Potter," "Art Training for Women," "The Stage for Women: Why It Appeals Strongly to Many of Them."[26] She made some tentative gestures toward women who worked far afield from the lives experienced by her readers, those women who could afford to shop at Wanamakers and Macy's, two of the major advertisers on the Post's weekday women's page. The articles dealt with such topics as Salvation Army women and their training, Italian and Irish immigrant women who were spinners and weavers, and "Colored Hospital Nurses."[27]

Her coverage of women in the labor force became increasingly investigative in nature and strident in tone. Just as anthropologists often do their best work in the field, so Dorr seemed to thrive on covering the realities of women's lives in the shops and factories. Her

articles about working women, with whom she rubbed elbows daily as she made her way through the teeming streets to her apartment near College Settlement[28] on Rivington Street, provide a vivid picture of substandard conditions and of the courageous stamina of women in the work force.

Some of the articles which indicate this growing militancy include "A Passing Disability, Why Women's Work Is Not Always Fully Rewarded," "Children's Strike, Young Box-Makers Organized Against Cut Wages," "The Workingman's Income, How Much of It Is Contributed by Wife and Children," "Organizing the Cook, Clubs for Domestic Workers Which May Become Unions," "The Necktie Makers, An Industry Largely in the Sweatshops."[29]

Her move to rooms on Rivington Street sometime in the spring of 1903 apparently does account for the increasingly strident, investigative nature of her articles. Elizabeth Williams, head of College Settlement, allowed Dorr to get her meals at the settlement house. Dorr became a "social student" as well as a participant in settlement efforts toward improving the immigrants' living, educational and working conditions.[30] She made friends with working girls and their families and, on occasion, served as a "Sabbath goy" in the predominantly Jewish East Side neighborhood.[31]

Also in 1903, Dorr began covering the sporadic strike efforts of working women. The conservative Post approached this subject hesitantly, but Lamont did assign Dorr to cover the gold beaters' strike.[32] Gold beaters were young girls who did just that: pounded the precious metal into fine sheets of gold leaf to be used in decorating books, cards,

frames and other items. In January of 1904, Dorr covered a strike at the Tiffany glass works where the problems of working men's resentment of women was a key issue.[33] The all-male union artisans were striking and among their demands was that Tiffany's not only stop hiring women but also fire the ones already employed. Tiffany's agreed to the first stipulation but "refused to dismiss the twenty-seven women...and reserved the right to fill their places with other women should they leave voluntarily."

The issue of women in the Tiffany strike exemplifies the position of the woman worker at the time. Union men, instead of opening their organizations to women and going to management demanding equal pay and equal work for both sexes, wanted to keep women out of the unions and out of the workplace. Manufacturers welcomed women workers since they could be paid less than men, making the women despised competition from the male laborers' point of view.[34]

Such working and living experiences made Dorr an integral part of the efforts to improve the lot of women in the work force. In addition to her growing involvement with the club movement, Dorr became a member of the New York chapter of the Women's Trade Union League.[35] The League, which had been founded in Boston in 1903 to provide a means for organizing women so they could seek recourse for their pay and conditions demands, opened a New York chapter in 1905. Dorr, along with reporters from other papers, became a member shortly after the NYWTUL was founded. In the fall of 1904, Dorr had issued her call for GFWC members to address the problems of women in industry, an appeal which coincided with national efforts by the WTUL leadership to have the issue of working women and children studied by the federal government.

In February, 1905, Dorr was among the women who traveled to Washington to appeal to President Theodore Roosevelt to intercede with Congress and help make such a study possible. The women, led by Jane Addams, and including Mary E. McDowell of University of Chicago Settlement, Lillian D. Wald, head of the Nurses Settlement of New York, and Margaret Dreier, president of the NYWTUL also met with Congressional leaders and the commissioner of labor.[36]

Club women's involvement in support of a federal investigation was imperative. For the president and Congress to ignore "radical" social workers and immigrant labor union members would have been easy; to ignore the petitions and letter-writing campaigns of "establishment" women all over the nation was quite another matter. These women were the wives of the politicians' constituents and, in a few western states, a part of the voting public. Dorr organized this petition/letter campaign through direct correspondence with club presidents, detailed accounts of the campaign in her "Interests" column, and through the Federation Bulletin.[37] She credited the federal study idea as being "mainly through the instrumentality of the Women's Trade Union League."[38] But, she does not indicate in any of her GFWC articles that she was a WTUL member and committee chairwoman in addition to holding her Federation post. In regard to the conservative element in the clubs, this "sin of omission" quite possibly was not that at all but simply an act of diplomacy.

Responding to the appeal for his support, Roosevelt mentioned the study in his message to Congress in December, 1905. His interest in the working women's plight quite probably did not parallel that of Dorr and the other petitioners, however. Roosevelt, head of expanding

family and husband of a woman who shunned publicity,[39] seems to have been committed to the idea of woman's place as in the home. He had already made statements about his concern over "race suicide," the prevailing idea that women who worked outside the home were having fewer babies, thus depriving the nation--"the American race"--of population growth.[40]

Although the proposal now had the President's support and the concurrence of some Congressional leaders, the bill approving and funding the study was encountering opposition as it moved through the committee structure of the House and Senate.[41] Such resistance made approval at the biennial convention in St. Paul all the more necessary.

Dorr, who had seen working women at the 1904 biennial, and had suggested to clubs that local women in the labor force be invited to club meetings as part of local industrial studies,[42] incorporated working "girls" into her presentation at St. Paul. She had hoped to take Rose Schneiderman[43] from New York with her to the convention, but Schneiderman was not able to go. McDowell, a member of the Industrial Committee, brought with her from Chicago two young women, Alice Nestor, a glovemaker, and Josephine Casey, who was working for the "L."

When Dorr took the podium Monday morning, June 4, 1904, delegates and convention-goers who had been reading her quietly stated but urgent messages about the necessity to aid women in the work force were probably not prepared for the address Dorr was about to give. Calling on her experience in covering such things as the collar makers' strike in Troy, N.Y., which Dorr had covered for Charities magazine,[44] she demanded that the women realize that forcing employers to give fair wages and improve conditions was the only way such things as "race suicide" would be

abolished. She also mentioned, in a charming anecdote about her son, Julian, and an Italian immigrant boy, a word which could strike fear within the minds of her listeners: socialism. She appealed to the audience to "abolish charity" and "stand for justice instead of charity for the workers."[45]

Following her address, Nestor[46] and Casey described hard conditions, low wages and long hours which had existed before their unionization. Casey described the "insults of unscrupulous employers" that made the work place a "terror" for some women. What Casey was describing in roundabout terms so necessary at the time was sexual harassment.[47]

While the majority of the club women were supportive of the two "working girls" and later proved it by their endorsement of the government study legislation, a member of a St. Louis club rose to speak and said, "We have been ridden to death by the working girl. Why don't you come into our homes where you can get good wages, excellent board, a fine home and easy hours? I have heard too much complaint . . . ." Casey, her temper piqued, replied, "If the clubwomen are not capable of running their own homes, why do they expect the working girls to do it for them?" Newspaper accounts of the exchange are vivid; one reporter indicated that the incident provided the only excitement of the week-long session.[48]

But the women looking for household help were in the minority. Dorr's address, the finale of two years of effort as chairwoman of the Industrial Committee, had won the majority. "She dared to speak approvingly of such unpopular things as Socialism, strikes, etc., but her honesty, earnestness and clear-headed logic made them popular, temporarily, at least," according to an account in the convention publication Biennial Daily News.[49]

That Dorr was "radical" in her views of "woman's place" is supported by contemporary theory. Labor historian Alice Kessler-Harris has noted that the literature on women as wage earners has "served to perpetuate the underlying myths that anchored women so firmly in disadvantaged positions. As it was itself blinded to the possibility that women were not naturally disadvantaged, so it obscured the possibility that women were not operating in a competitive labor market at all."[50] Although her political affiliation would undergo a conservative change from Socialist to Republican,[51] Dorr would remain adamant about the necessity of women's equal, not protected, status in the work place.[52]

Dorr stood firm that women should not be an auxiliary to men, but should be equal partners in the human race. She described the typical business woman in one of her Sunday Supplement columns in 1905 as being "a sensible, progressive, ambitious type of humanity, so different from the heroines of romance or the clinging vines of old-fashioned ideals that it is difficult to realize that they belong to the same race."[53]

Her advocacy of adequate training and job success was not limited to those women who were in business and/or professions. In an article, "The Odd Job Woman," Dorr established a case for this kind of piece-meal work as being a dead end:

> The best advice ever given to girls who desire to make money is to cease dabbling and learn a real trade, business or profession. ... The same fate (being at the bottom of the pay scale) awaits a girl who is not willing to learn how to do some kind of work thoroughly and, to engage in it as if she expected to do it all her life. The odd-job woman is a temporary and undependable creature, just as the odd job is an accidental and occasional thing.[54]

Although the study of women in the workplace, the endorsement of which had been so carefully engineered, would result in the eventual adoption of protective legislation for women workers and the formation

of a Woman's Bureau within the labor department, such a "segregation" of women in the work force was clearly not what Dorr had in mind. As she told the club women at the St. Paul gathering: "Men and women who have sound judgment and right knowledge on many other subjects rush into print with the most crooked and devious opinions on this subject. They assume as a hypothesis that the wage-earning woman is an abnormal creature, something forced and unnatural, a disease of civilization." This statement reflects a consistent theme of reformers at the time: that women's work was, for a great segment of society, not just frivolous but very necessary, that a man, as Dorr reminded convention delegates, simply could not afford to support his family on his salary alone.

However necessary this work was--and continues to be--as Kessler-Harris points out, convincing society only of the necessity of women working outside their "proper sphere," the home, did indeed lead to the segregation of women into lower-paid, dead-end positions. Dorr realized this just as she realized that women worked outside the home for more reasons than financial ones; for Dorr, personal independence and a sense of self-satisfaction was as vital for that "auxiliary" part of the human race as it was for the dominant sex.

Dorr tried to convey that this attitude toward work was acceptable for women, rather than peculiar or unnatural. Ambition, interest in the job were not sexual characteristics. Illustrative of this point is an article, "The New Workingwoman,"[55] where Dorr describes the efforts of a male writer for a "popular" magazine who attempted to gather material about women and their work by writing to tradeswomen whose advertisements he had seen published: one was a dealer in seeds and the other a beekeeper. Dorr gleefully reports that the "seedswoman" responded that she was too

busy with her work to provide the writer with details for his story.

Dorr's mocking tone toward the male writer is evident when she details the beekeeper's response to the writer's letter: two "neatly typed" pages were sent, detailing the types of bees which were the best producers and indicating that, since the woman had been in the business for 20 years, she considered it good work. The beekeeper closed with the observation, "There is always a good demand for first-rate honey, and, of course, a woman beekeeper would raise nothing but good honey." In Dorr's comment on the beekeeper's matter-of-fact response lies evidence of her understanding of women's satisfaction through work not connected with domesticity:

> (the letter contained) Not a word about herself; no account of her family relations; no explanation of the causes that led her to become an apiarist. The disobliging woman did not even mention what she did with her profits, or enclose group pictures of children being educated through their brave mother's efforts.

According to Dorr, the magazine writer was "amazed" and "reflected that if business women were beginning to take themselves for granted in this wholesale way, cease to regard their performances as exceptional and themselves as creatures apart, the path of the hack writer was going to become thornier than ever."

This sense of women finding independence through work outside the traditional domestic sphere is illustrated by the "servant girl problem," the issue raised by the Missouri club woman. Women of means were confronting a phenomenon which perplexed them: young women preferred to work in factories for hourly wages than to live in the comfortable homes of the well-to-do and provide domestic service, which, by all existing standards, should have come naturally to them since women's "place" was in the home, even if that home were someone else's.

This issue of domestic work has never been adequately confronted. Then it received more attention than it does now even though just who is to do the maintainence of life work and how much they are to be paid for it is still a social issue which begs for study. Then, as industrialization was booming, providing factory work for both native-born and immigrant women flooding into the nation's cities, the cheerful "girls" who tended the children, cooked the family meals and kept the Victorian bric-a-brac dust-free were no longer easily accessible for the women accustomed to such services.

Dorr was fully aware of and sympathetic to working class women's reasons for not wanting to enter domestic service or for fleeing from the homes of the upper class shortly after finding employment there. One of the most obvious reasons was poor pay and certainly Dorr provided a strong voice for good and equal pay for women. As she told the St. Paul convention:

> . . . there is no difference between men and women when it comes down to the vital facts of life. When a woman accomplishes a task she is entitled to be paid for that task exactly what a man would be paid. Indeed, she is under absolute obligation to demand the same pay for the same work.

Adequate wages for housework was not the only issue, however. In a Saturday Supplement column in 1904 Dorr reported the failure of an experiment conducted by the Massachusetts WTUL.[56] Several young women were encouraged to leave the Fall River mills and enter domestic service. "The experiment was a failure, of course," Dorr wrote. Reasons given included homesickness and isolation. "Another objection was the servile position the girl had to assume. In the mill she was with her social equals." The factor of freedom which relates to self-image and self-respect surpassed the pay problem.

Dorr had pointed this out in one of her by-lined features, "A Waitress's Story."[57] The waitress about whom Dorr wrote had left domestic service primarily for the reasons Dorr recognized:

> They don't give a girl a chance to live her life like a human being. I have stated hours here (at the restaurant), food, wages; part of the day to myself with no one asking me what I do with it; and--and I have a right to see my friends and go out with them when my work is over.

For the reader who might have missed the point of the long article--one in which Dorr estimated that this particular waitress walked the equivalent of 12 miles servicing just three restaurant tables because of the distance of the kitchen from the dining room--Dorr closed with: "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Are they not inalienable rights to one class as in another?"

Because of her own motivation to find satisfaction, not just salary, in her work and because of her thorough knowledge of working women in various classes of New York--sweatshop seamstresses, waitresses, clerks, business women, college-educated, settlement workers--Dorr was able to see work in a light other than that of simple survival. However, she cannot have been very surprised when, at the close of her part of the program in St. Paul, the "servant problem" flared again.

After the biennial, Dorr sent Julian to Omaha to spend the summer with his grandmother and embarked on her first trip to Europe to cover the coronation of the King of Norway. She had asked for a promotion at the Post, but was told her ideas were too radical.[58] Throughout a writing career which would place her among the "muckrakers,"[59] Dorr would appeal for the equal treatment of women in the work place.

A much larger question of primary concern to journalism historians is posed by this brief examination of Dorr's journalistic, working world and club participation. As historians strive toward a cultural approach to the relationship between media and social movements, we should look past the front pages of the newspapers we study. How has women's participation and current status within the labor force--and within journalism history--been shaped by the attention women have received? Did women's editors slow the progress of women in those years following the advocacy of the Progressive Era?

Certainly women's clubs, just like other agencies of society including the press, backed away from radical action as the Progressive Era faded. Did women's editors become too closely emeshed with the club coverage and fail to report wide-ranging social issues? What was going on in those "back of the book" pages which either reinforced cultural norms or established beachheads for cultural deviance leading to new roles? The temptation is to give these serious questions facile answers; the challenge lies in research and re-focus on what has shaped social issues as presented by mass media and who have been the shapers, the controllers, the gatekeepers of such stories. This paper does not attempt to respond to the enormity of these questions but rather, via one case study, suggests that an entire area of journalism history lies waiting to be examined, to be interpreted, to be, at its base, reported.

NOTES

1. Rheta Childe Dorr, A Woman of Fifty, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1924), p. 107. In addition to her autobiography, information about Dorr can be found in "Rheta C. Dorr, 82, Author, Feminist," New York Times, Aug. 9, 1948, p. 19; "Mrs. Rheta Childe Dorr, 83, Dies; Feminist, Author, Ex-Reporter," New York Herald Tribune, Aug. 10, 1948, p. 18; "Rheta Childe Dorr," Equal Rights, May-June-July-August, 1948, p. 39; Notable American Women, 1607-1950, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 503; Jennifer L. Tebbe, "Rheta Childe Dorr," American Women Writers, Lina Mainiero, ed., (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 529-31, among other sources.

   Valuable information about Dorr was provided by her niece, Delight Ansley, in a personal interview at Lambertville, N.J., on May 12, 1979, and through further conversations and correspondence. Also helpful to the author's understanding of Dorr was a personal interview with Dorr's youngest brother, Cyril E. Childe, and his wife, Frances Childe at Cambridge, Md., June 12, 1979.

   Further acknowledgements must go to Martha (McCoy) Snyder for excellent research assistance and to the research committees of the Pennsylvania State University and the University of North Dakota for their financial support.

2. Sarah Platt Decker scrapbook, 1906-07, loaned to the author by the Woman's Club of Denver, represented by Gladys E. Hartmann, president, 1979. The author also received assistance from the national headquarters of the General Federation of Women's Clubs through the GFWC public relations director, Mildred Ahlgren of Washington, D.C.

3. Richard Hofstader, The Age of Reform, (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 244.

4. The relationship between newswomen and women's clubs was close from the start of the club movement, which had its roots in women's activities for the Sanitary Commission which served the Union Army during the Civil War. See Mary Elizabeth Massey, Bonnet Brigades, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966). The founding of the first general interest and service club for women is credited to Jane Cunningham Croly or "Jennie June" who formed Sorosis Club in 1868. Croly, whoo had a long and influential career writing about women's "interests" for various newspapers, was present when the General Federation, the national unification of women's clubs, was established in 1889. See Marion Marzolf, Up From the Footnote: A History of Women Journalists, (New York: Hastings House, 1977), pp. 21-22; Ishbel Ross, Ladies of the Press, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), pp. 44-5; Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle, (New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 180. However, it should be noted that Jane Croly's working in the offices of some of the newspapers for which she wrote was an exceptional situation. The years from about 1850 on were very good ones for women writers whose essays and articles frequently appeared in both

newspapers and magazines, but these writers were correspondents, compiling their pieces at home and sending them to the publications' offices. See, for example, Fred Lewis Pattee, The Feminine Fifties, (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1940). Newspapers were interested in popular essayists' opinion pieces and, increasingly as the years passed and the nation became more urbanized and industrialized toward consumer products, in columns about fashions, furnishings and food. Women involved in suffrage and club work (the two were often not linked) charged male editors with not being interested in "serious news" about women. And so, during the growth period of the club "network," more reliance was placed on specialized publications such as Woman's Journal. See Lynne Masel-Walters, "A Burning Cloud by Day: The History and Content of the 'Woman's Journal'," Journalism History, 3:4 (Winter 1976-77), pp. 103-110.

Not until the late 1880s did papers begin to hire women as fulltime employees who actually worked at the newspaper offices, and even then, they encountered attitudes from their male colleagues and editors ranging from overt disdain to bemusement. See Ross, op. cit., p. 17, and Zena Beth McGlashan, "The Evolving Status of Newspaperwomen," (University of Iowa: doctoral dissertation, 1978), pp. 52-76.

5. James W. Carey, "The Problem of Journalism History," Journalism History, 1:1 (Spring 1974); _____, seminars in cultural history of communication, 1976-77, University of Iowa; John D. Stevens and Hazel D. Garcia, Communication History, (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980). Carey terms culture to be the organization of social experience in the human consciousness "manifested in symbolic action."

6. Dorr's books, Inside the Russian Revolution, 1917, and A Soldier's Mother in France, 1918, fairly sizzle with her dedication to war reporting as being "real" journalism. An excerpt from Inside appears in Maurine Beasley and Sheila (Silver) Gibbs, Women in Media: A Documentary Sourcebook, (Washington: Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, 1977), pp. 62-66.

7. Walter Lippman and Charles Merz, "A Test of the News," special supplement to The New Republic, Aug. 4, 1920, pp. 1-42. Also see Martha (McCoy) Snyder, "'A Hapless Russia': A Critical Analysis of Rheta Childe Dorr's Reporting of the Russian Revolution," (Pennsylvania State University master's paper, 1980).

8. Dorr, Woman of Fifty, op. cit., p. 97. Dorr's autobiography will hereafter be cited as Fifty. It should be noted that Dorr, who was born Nov. 2, 1866, was certainly well over 50 when the book was published in 1924.

9. See, for example, Zena Beth (Guenin) McGlashan, "Women's Pages in the 1970s," Montana Journalism Review, 16 (Spring, 1973), pp. 27-32; Jean Sharley Taylor, "'Hell Hath . . . ' Just Ain't Good Enough," ASNE Bulletin, 554, Oct. 1971, pp. 3-7.

10. Interview by the author with Marjorie Paxson, publisher of the Muskogee, Okla., Daily Phoenix, March 1979.

11. Fifty, op. cit., p. 119.

12. Allan Nevisn, The Evening Post: A Century of Journalism, (New York: Boni and Liverright, Publishers, 1922), pp. 577-8. It is interesting to note that Dorr is the only woman mentioned in this history of the Post.

13. Fifty, op. cit., p. 97.

14. Ibid., p. 98.

15. Ibid., p. 3[illegible]

16. Ibid., p. 73.

17. Ibid., p. 83.

18. Ibid., p. 96.

19. Ibid., p. 92.

20. "Club Women Voting," New York Evening Post, Nov. 12, 1902, p. 8; "Marooned In A Lobby," Post, Nov. 14, 1902, p. 2. In Fifty, pp. 101-3, Dorr recalls an exchange of opinions about women's issues, suffrage in particular, with city editor H. J. Learoyd, who would later succeed Lamont as managing editor of the Post. After reading coverage of the New York Federation in other dailies, Learoyd told Dorr to cover "this damned nonsense in Brooklyn." The anecdote is recounted in Ross, op. cit., p. 115, and Marzolf, op. cit., p. 45.

A note about research methods employed for this study: Since Dorr is absolutely elusive about many dates in her autobiography, her own story was cross-checked with issues of the Post from January 1902 through June 1906, in addition to searching auxiliary sources, some of which are noted here. Unfortunately, the microfilm of the Post from July through September, 1902, was not available and that appears to be about the time Lamont hired Dorr.

Dorr's reluctance to reveal her age frustrated Louis S. Filler when he was preparing the Dorr entry which appears in Notable American Women, op. cit. In a letter to one of Dorr's sisters, Mrs. Clarke Fisher Ansley, dated March 14, 1960, Filler commented: "I have, of course, a respect for the fashion in which she preferred to present herself to the public--though I would have thought a suffragist would have had less self-consciousness about such matters . . . ." Filler called his search for Dorr's birthdate "too long and tiring."

21. "Women and Their Interests," Saturday Supplement, Post, Jan. 3, 1903, p. 4.

22. Ibid., March 12, 1904.

23. The Decker scrapbook (see note 2) contains clippings from various papers around the nation. Further biographical detail on Decker may be found in Mary I. Wood, The History of the GFWC, (New York: Norwood, 1912), pp. 183-199; M. W. Wells, Unity in Diversity, (Washington: GFWC, 1953); Lois Cress, "Historic Gavel Again Has Table to Pound," Denver Post, Dec. 23, 1965, p. 19, and many other sources.

24. Decker scrapbook. Unfortunately, some clippings are not identified as to city. This story is told in the Tribune--which one is not indicated.

25. Fifty, op. cit., p. 119.

26. The articles, in order of mention, appeared in the Post on Jan. 7, 1903, p. 14; April 8, 1903, p. 14; May 13, 1903, p. 14.

27. Post, April 15, 1903, p. 14; Nov. 4, 1903, p. 7; Dec. 30, 1903, p. 4.

28. Fifty, op. cit., p. 107. Dorr claims interest in finding out about the real conditions of working women was her impetus for moving to the East Side neighborhood.

29. These stories, in order of mention, appeared on the Post's Wednesday women's page on Dec. 23, 1903, p. 12; Dec. 21, 1904, p. 14; Jan. 4, 1905, p. 4; Feb. 8, 1905, p. 5; Dec. 20, 1905, p. 10.

30. Fifty, op. cit., p. 108.

31. Some of Dorr's Post articles about her Jewish neighbors include "East Side Industries, Trades at Which Jewish Women Make Money," May 2, 1903; "Seeing New York With Moses, A Saturday Night Stroll With an East Side Boy," Nov 5, 1904; "Holy Week in the Ghetto," April 22, 1905. These articles all appeared on page 1 of the Saturday Supplement.

32. Fifty, op. cit., p. 103.

33. "Making Glass Mosaics," Post, Jan. 6, 1904, p. 14. Note that the headline makes no reference to a strike, nor do any of the decks beneath the main head. Dorr says in Fifty, p. 107: that, "after Mr. Lamont got through editing my story" the men's case against the women sounded "terribly plausible." Since this headline, as with many others, does not adequately reflect the story, the writer believes it safe to assume that the headlines for Dorr's material were written by the male editors, not Dorr.

34. The bias against women on the part of male union leaders and members is recounted in several sources. See, for example, Barbara Mayer Wetheimer, We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America, (New York: Random House, 1976) and Rosalyn Baxandall, Linda Gordon and Susan Reverby, eds., America's Working Women, (New York: Random House, 1976).

35. Dorr was elected to membership at the NYWTUL's meeting of March 10, 1905, along with Joseph Buchanan of the Journal, Eugene Johnston of the Daily News and Izola Forrester of the World. NYWTUL minutes in Papers of the WTUL and Its Principal Leaders, New York State Department of Labor Library. Apparently, Dorr was immediately appointed chair of the Press and Publicity Committee, a post she resigned "with regret" in January of 1906. See minutes, Jan. 1, 1906, Ibid.

36. Dorr, Rheta Childe, "The Right of Petition," GFWC Bulletin 3:2 (November 1905), p. 69. In Fifty, p. 121, Dorr mentions only McDowell and Dreier, who was married to Raymond Robins in June of 1905 and is mentioned as Mrs. Robins in Dorr's autobiography. That she would omit a woman as famous as Jane Addams when writing her memoirs is easily explained. Dorr was adamantly pro-war during World War I and Addams' pacificism caused many women to turn against her. See Allen F. Davis, American Heroine: The Life and Legend of Jane Addams, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

37. "Interests," Post, Saturday Supplement, Jan. 30, 1905, p. 4; "Industrial Conditions," GFWC Bulletin, 3:1, (October, 1905), pp. 13-14; "Industrial Committee," GFWC Bulletin, 3:4 (January 1906), pp. 163-4; "Interests," Post, December 30, 1905, p. 4.

38. Rheta Childe Dorr, "Protection of Women Employees," GFWC Bulletin, 2:9, June 1905, p. 277.

39. Edmund Morris, The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt, (New York, Ballantine Books, 1979, 1980), pp. 578-9. Roosevelt commented on the dangers of "race suicide" in a glowing preface to a book by Bessie and Marie Von Vorst, The Woman Who Toils: Being the Experiences of Two Ladies as Factory Girls, (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1903), pp. vii-ix. The title of the Von Vorsts' book suggests their class-oriented view of working women. Dorr despised the book and, in Fifty, p. 163, said the Von Vorsts "understood nothing of the significance of women's exodus from home to factory work."

40. The President's message supported the study but included his biases: "The introduction of women into industry is working change and disturbance in the domestic and social life of the nation. The decrease in marriage, and especially in the birth rate, has been coincident with it." Dorr quoted the paragraph about the study from the President's message in "Interests," Post, Saturday Supplement, Dec. 30, 1905, p. 4.

41. "Women and Child Labor," Report No. 5745, House of Representatives, 59th Congress, March 30, 1906, pp. 1-3. "Investigation of the Industrial, Etc., Condition of Woman and Child Workers in the United States," Report No. 4245, Senate, 59th Congress, June 9, 1906, pp. 1-2; Congressional Record, Senate, Dec. 18, 1906, pp. 500, 556; Ibid., House Jan. 23, 1907, p. 1588; Ibid., House, Jan. 1, 1907, pp. 1457-63; Ibid., Senate, Jan. 31, 1907, p. 2004; Ibid., Senate, Jan. 24, 1907, p. 1609. One of the arguments used by Congressional opponents of the study was that census figures should provide sufficient statistics; another was that the questioning of employers about their employees might constitute an invasion of privacy. The 19-volume study which eventually resulted was Report on the Condition of Women and Child Wage Earners in the U.S.,61st Congress, Senate Document No. 645, 1910, 1911, 1912.

42. The Federation had heard working women at its 1904 biennial in St. Louis; however, these were members of the Woman's Century Club, a club-sponsored organization for working girls. "Altruism in Factories," Post, June 1, 1904, p. 12. What Dorr had in mind was working women who were union members and had strong feelings about the conditions they encountered. In the Bulletin, 3:1, (October 1905), pp. 13-14, Dorr suggested club women seek out working women in their own communities and have them talk at club meetings. "I have been told that the industrial problems were interesting in New York and very tame elsewhere," she wrote. "I am certain this is not the case."

43. Schneiderman was elected president of the NYWTUL in 1906. Rose Schneiderman with Lucy Goldthwaite, All For One, (New York: Paul S. Eriksson, Inc., 1967). An article, "A Cap Maker's Story," by Schneiderman appeared in The Independent, April 27, 1905, (LVII: 2943), pp. 935-8, about six weeks after Dorr became publicity chairwoman for the NYWTUL. "In A Cap Factory," a news report of the Independent article, appeared in the Post, June 10, 1905, p. 5. That Schneiderman had Dorr's help in writing and placing her account of the cap makers' strike is quite likely.

44. In Fifty, p. 115, Dorr says she covered the strike for Outlook, but a search of the magazine did not reveal any coverage of the protest at Troy. However, Dorr did write "The Women Strikers of Troy" for Charities, Nov. 18, 1905 (15:233-6). Her efforts on behalf of the strikers are also noted in Alice Henry, Women and the Labor Movement, (New York: MacMillan Co., 1927), p. 75.

45. "Report of the Industrial Committee," Official Report: Eighth Biennial Convention, GFWC, May 30-June 7, 1906, Mrs. John Dickinson Sherman, ed., (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1906), pp. 235-44.

46. Years after the St. Paul appearance, Nestor remembered the event, a recollection which closely matches news reports in the Decker scrapbook. Agnes Nestor, Woman's Labor Leader: An Autobiography, (Rockford, Ill.: Bellvue Books Publishing Co., 1954), pp. 72-4. Some newspapers had great "fun" with the working "girls" and club "ladies" issue.

47. Mary Bularzik, "Sexual Harassment at the Workplace: Historical Notes," Radical America, 12:7 (July-August 1978), pp. 25-41.

48. Decker scrapbook. "Kitchen vs. Work Shop, Biennial Woman and Working Girl Disagree on Industrial Problem, Clash at Meeting," St. Paul Pioneer Press, June 5, 1906, and several other clippings.

49. Ibid. Janet Page, "Biennial Etchings," GFWC Biennial Daily News.

50. Alice Kessler-Harris, "Women's Wage Work as Myth and History," Labor History, 19:2 (Spring 1978), p. 289.

51. Rheta Childe Dorr, "A Covert From Socialism," North American Review, 224 (November 1927), pp. 498-504.

52. _____, "Should There Be Labor Laws for Women? No Says Rheta Childe Dorr," Good Housekeeping 81 (September 1925) pp. 156, 159-164. The "Yes" response was written by Mary Anderson, chief of the Women's Bureau, Department of Labor.

53. Post, July 8, 1905, p. 4.

54. Ibid., Aug. 30, 1905, p. 12.

55. Ibid., May 4, 1904, p. 12.

56. Ibid., Oct. 1, 1904, p. 4.

57. Ibid., Aug. 23, 1905, p. 7.

58. Fifty, op. cit., pp. 127-8.

59. Louis Filler, Crusaders for American Liberalism, (Yellow Springs: Antioch Press, 1950), pp. 270-3; _____, The Muckrakers, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), pp. 270-3. Filler says Dorr was "Ben Hampton's creation," alluding to her work at Hampton's Magazine. In Fifty, pp. 202-3, Dorr credited Hampton with teaching her a great deal about writing, but, as demonstrated by her work at the Post, Dorr was already an experienced and knowledgeable reporter on reform issues before she was hired at Hampton's, circa 1908. In view of her strength and determination, to say that Dorr was anyone's "creation" but her own is amusing at best.